



Senate Bill 359

Community College Tuition and Residency Waivers - Funding

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: February 15, 2023

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 359. This bill would provide state funds for a current unfunded statutory mandate for community colleges to provide in-state and full tuition waivers for specified categories of students.

Counties are proud to support community colleges as they serve as a critical piece of Maryland's higher education infrastructure. However, current law requires community colleges to charge lower in-state tuition – or to fully waive tuition – for students that the State has mandated as eligible for such tuition waivers, without any State funding to support the loss of revenue community colleges are experiencing because of this unfunded mandate.

This has proven burdensome for community colleges and the local governments that support them, as they are often faced with cutting programmatic and operational budgets to make up for the lost revenue caused by the unfunded mandate of State-required in-state and full tuition waivers. Ultimately, the unintended budgetary consequences of this unfunded mandate are significant.

Counties have long sought a solution to this issue and SB 359 would be a good step in the right direction. The bill would, in essence, fund the currently unfunded mandate of in-state tuition by requiring an annual appropriation in the State budget for the Maryland Higher Education Commission of \$10,000,000 from fiscal years 2025 through 2027 to fund State-mandated community college tuition and residency waivers.

Not only would the bill address the current unfunded mandate, but it would also be a strong demonstration of the State's commitment to an equitable distribution of support for community colleges. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 359 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.